



FIRST PERSON

Beekeeper gets her first taste of honey

USAID-funded small grant helps Rwandans seize the opportunity to learn modern beekeeping techniques and supplement their incomes



“Even though I have never even tasted honey, now I have the opportunity to learn to produce it and help feed my family with the extra income.”

— Mukandori Pascasia,
beekeeper at Nyungwe
National Park

Mukandori Pascasia, age 52, is about to taste honey for the first time in her life. Her beekeeping cooperative has built an impressive shelter with scores of modern and traditional beehives inside. Mukandori is proud to be one of the first women in her community to try her hand--and succeed--at this traditionally male-dominated occupation.

Mukandori is one of 22 women in the Terimbere Muvumvu Cooperative (46 people total), supported through USAID's Destination Nyungwe Project (DNP) implemented by International Resources Group. USAID's grant to the cooperative supports the group's modern organized beekeeping. Unlike traditional beekeeping, the group will not “smoke” the bees as a method to harvest honey – thus reducing the major cause of forest fires in the Park.

Located in southwestern Rwanda, Nyungwe is one of the largest mountainous rainforests remaining in Africa. DNP's primary objective is to jointly accelerate rural economic growth and improve biodiversity conservation in and around the forest. Through its Small Grants Program, the DNP encourages the participation of communities surrounding the Park in the forest's conservation, while providing viable “biodiversity-friendly” economic opportunities to local residents, particularly women and youth.

Mukanodori walks the 22-kilometer (about 14 miles) distance to the beehive site from her home in Kitabi Sector. She sees the time spent as an “investment” towards not only learning a new skill, but also improving her family's livelihood. Like for other members in Mukanodori's cooperative, beekeeping presents an innovative opportunity for Mukanodori to supplement her family's small income earned from tea harvesting.